



AD HOC WORK GROUP

MINIDOKA NORTH SIDE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Meeting No. 1 Summary

Meeting Date: April 11, 2002

I. MEETING ATTENDEES

AHWG Members

**Denotes attendance at this AHWG meeting*

- Billy Thompson, Minidoka Irrigation District*
- Bob Caywood, Pheasants Forever
- Cary Bristol, Cassia County Sheriff's Office*
- Dan Temple, A&B Irrigation District*
- Dan Kindig, Minidoka County Sheriff's Office*
- Dave Pinther, Local Business*
- Dennis Crane, Cassia County Commission
- Don Handy, Minidoka County Commission*
- Duane Reynolds, Audubon Society
- Gary Schorzman, Minidoka County Historical Society
- Guy Dodson, Sr., Shoshone-Paiute Tribes*
- Hunter Osborne, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
- Jerry Ball, Adjacent Landowner and Pheasants Forever*
- Paul Carney, Adjacent Landowner standing in for Lloyd Richins*
- Mark Fleming, Idaho Department of Fish and Game*
- Reid Smith, Minidoka County Weed Control*
- David Joyce, City of Rupert standing in for Robert Christensen*
- Scott Barker, Bureau of Land Management*
- Steve Bouffard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Steve Schuyler, Natural Resource Conservation Service*
- Trapper Richardson, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation*
- Veronica Lierman, Jerome County Commission

Planning Team

**Denotes attendance at this AHWG meeting*

- Carolyn Burpee Stone, Team Leader, Reclamation*
- Chris Ketchum, Snake River Area Office Resource Manager, Reclamation*
- Yvonne Daniel, Realty, Reclamation*
- Jena Hickey, Biologist, Reclamation*
- Kraig Howe, Realty, Reclamation*
- Gary Young, GIS, Reclamation*
- Kevin Butterbaugh, EDAW*
- Chuck Blair, CH2M HILL
- Brandy Wilson, CH2M HILL*
- John Petrovsky, JPA*

II. INTRODUCTION

This document is a summary of the first Ad Hoc Work Group (AHWG) Meeting for the Minidoka North Side RMP, held April 11, 2002, in Burley, Idaho. The meeting agenda was sent to all AHWG members ahead of the meeting. The purpose of this summary is to document the topics and issues discussed at the AHWG meeting.

Planning Team and AHWG Member Introductions

John Petrovsky began the meeting by briefly introducing each of the Planning Team members (listed above). The main participants on the Planning Team include Reclamation and its consulting specialists (EDAW, JPA, and CH2M HILL).

The members of the AHWG then introduced themselves, in seating order, and identified their affiliation (AHWG members in attendance are listed above with an asterisk by their name). The intent of Reclamation in forming the AHWG is to ensure participation by the wide range of stakeholders with an interest in the Minidoka North Side RMP, including agencies, irrigation districts, local organizations, recreation users, and residents.

John directed the Work Group's attention to the 3-ring binders provided to each member pointing out some of the materials contained within it. The binders have been organized by meeting (Meeting 1, Meeting 2, Meeting 3, and so on).

III. OVERVIEW OF THE RMP PROCESS & AHWG ROLE

John emphasized that the primary purpose of the first AHWG meeting was to gather input for formulation of the Problem Statement – Reclamation's term for a detailed discussion of the issues and opportunities to be addressed in the RMP. The Planning Team has started to compile a draft list of these issues and opportunities, mostly from preliminary discussions with the irrigation districts and other agencies, as well as feedback received at the March 6, 2002, public meeting and from the mail-in response form in the first Newsbrief. Because the AHWG is designed to represent stakeholder constituencies, this meeting was intended to get more specific input from the AHWG, which will feed into development of the Problem Statement.

To place the project in context, as well as define how the AHWG fits into the overall process, John presented a PowerPoint slideshow, the contents of which are briefly summarized below.

The RMP Study Area consists of approximately 16,000 acres, in 120 parcels, in four counties. Lake Walcott State Park is included, but not the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge. The lands in this study area were originally withdrawn or acquired as part of the Minidoka project but were never developed for irrigation.

A list of key terms and a glossary were included in the binder. Two terms of particular note are "withdrawn lands," which were originally under Bureau of Land Management (BLM) jurisdiction, and "acquired lands," which have been purchased by Reclamation or acquired as easements or rights of way.

So that the Planning Team and AHWG members are all using the same references, a numeric parcel identification system will be developed based on the township and range system. Some of these parcels also have common names and these terms may be used interchangeably in some limited instances.

The planning process, as well as the sideboards and limitations, are included in the AHWG binder. The purpose of the RMP is to create a 10-year blueprint that defines the future of the parcels and fulfills Reclamation's responsibilities with respect to the management and use of these lands. The sideboards and limitations are the Federal laws, including applicable Reclamation authorities, and Reclamation policies that must be followed in managing these parcels.

John reviewed the planning process organization and schedule, which are provided in the AHWG binder. Public involvement and Tribal involvement are two critical elements to the process. The AHWG is a key element in the RMP process. Seven AHWG meetings will take place over a 2-year period.

The goal of AHWG selection is to assemble about 20 people who represent their constituencies. The role of the AHWG is to provide continuous involvement; full consensus is not required. Reclamation has to make final decisions and, although they are open to different points of view, this is not a formal advisory group. The operational process is that Reclamation will provide materials to the AHWG members at least 1 week ahead of each meeting for their review. As the facilitator, John is charged with the role of keeping the meeting on track and the consultants are responsible for assisting in various ways and recording what transpires. The main ground rule for discussion is to maintain an informal atmosphere of mutual respect.

IV. ISSUES ROUNDTABLE

The focus of this meeting was to gather input from AHWG members on issues and opportunities, which will help form the basis of the Problem Statement. As noted above, preliminary input has been received from agency discussions, at the public meeting, and from the newsbrief response form. This was summarized in the AHWG binder and reviewed by John in the PowerPoint presentation. For the roundtable, people briefly described their issues, as summarized below.

Steve Schuyler, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): The NRCS is interested in this process because they work with the landowners and irrigation districts that have to work with Reclamation lands.

Dan Temple, A&B Irrigation District (A&B): Many of the parcels are within A&B's boundaries, so they have several interests:

- Protect transferred works and facilities from vandalism and off road vehicle (ORV) use (particularly parcel 824-8-W).
- Need to close 76 injection wells, which means that surface disposal will be needed (drainage management areas, or wetlands). Parcels must be retained to meet this future need. Wetlands require space—on the order of 30 to 40 acres—and the district has not identified all parcels that may be needed in the future (for example, A&B is currently expanding the F-pond [parcel 824-9-W]).

- Agriculture and grazing leases on Reclamation lands generates revenue for A&B because they assess fees. It would strain the District's budget if these leases were removed. (*Planning Team Note:* Revenues generated from use of Reclamation lands must be deposited to the Reclamation fund and would then be credited to the Project according to Reclamation law and policy.)
- Another effect of unused leases is that more water will need to be disposed of instead of getting used. If Reclamation could allow expansion of agricultural leases, it would assist A&B in getting rid of drain water and would also make more land productive within the county.
- Squaring-up the parcels with adjacent farm units would increase water efficiency and create a situation where there is less drainage water to deal with. Historically, odd-shaped farms worked well because of surface irrigation. With sprinklers, the odd parcels are not watered as efficiently and the drain quantities are different each day depending on the part of the farm watered.
- Acquire a better water source to protect current A&B lands. In the west area (1150 west, adjacent to parcel 921-1-W), the District has problems in the critical groundwater area with the aquifer not being prolific in certain areas. The area adjacent to Jerome/Minidoka county line is a critical water area. If A&B were able to move into parcels as little as 1 mile away, the water source would be more reliable.
- Bottom line: Need to protect current and future irrigation needs.

Reid Smith, Minidoka County Weed Control: Would like to remove weeds and re-establish native vegetation and grasses. Spraying for weeds has become a big issue; right now, there is not a buffer zone around injection wells, but if a 2-mile buffer zone (as suggested by some) were established, we would not be able to spray anywhere. Plan needs to consider noxious weed law enforcement, and we need to take care of weeds throughout the wetlands. Camp Hawley (924-5-A) has really bad thistles and is difficult to reach. John responded that an integrated pest management plan will be prepared in conjunction with this RMP and will include addressing noxious weeds.

David Joyce, City of Rupert: The City of Rupert uses parcel 824-10-W for effluent disposal and has a continuing interest in this regard.

Trapper Richardson, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR): IDPR is most concerned about the Bishop's Hole area and the Old Tree. Although the tree is nearing the end of its life, Trapper believes the life could be extended if it is patrolled or if a fence is put around it to keep people from trampling and burning the roots. For IDPR to assist with patrols, they need access by canoe. IDPR would also like the plan to look at trail development and potential grants for tree planting and trails.

Mark Fleming, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG): Management of the scattered wildlife tracts by their agency has always been a concern, especially with ORV use, fire, weeds, dumping, and trespass. IDFG views this RMP process as an opportunity to improve habitat conditions. The resource inventory will be particularly valuable to assist in improving management.

Dan Kindig, Minidoka County Sheriff's Office: Dumping and trespass is an enforcement burden. The ability to respond more rapidly would help. The Sheriff's Office is interested in parcel 925-9-W for a boat ramp to respond more quickly to enforcement issues and to help IDFG. Need to develop a good working relationship with Reclamation and the other agencies for everything from dam security, to trespass and dumping.

Guy Dodson, Sr., Fish and Game Director for Shoshone-Paiute Tribes: Although this area is probably part of the land ceded to the Sho-Bans, Shoshone-Paiute ancestors did roam this area in winter months. Therefore, the tribe's roots are attached here although currently living at Duck Valley. The Tribe's concern is that Federal laws such as Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and others are upheld, and that the government-to-government consultation happens.

Jerry Ball, adjacent landowner and (possibly) Pheasants Forever: Place the maximum amount of emphasis on irrigation district needs, because that is the ultimate goal of the Reclamation land. Square-up issues are important, because it makes the system more usable and is better for everyone. Also, put in better wildlife habitat on the ground to increase the pheasant population. There are endless possibilities for making the ground more valuable to the counties and public.

Paul Carney, landowner (standing in for Lloyd Richins): Agree with what Jerry and Dan T. have said with respect to irrigation needs, square-ups, and having land for wildlife. Also, would like to retain grazing leases; grazing cattle in a husbandry nature without abusing the resource is not a deterrent to wildlife.

Cary Bristol, Cassia County Sheriff's Office: Same issues as Dan K. with respect to communication among agencies and need for a better response time for enforcement.

Dave Pinther, local business representative: Would like to see places developed for recreation as an economic benefit; for example, develop Bishop's Hole with trails to benefit fishing and provide access to the fishing area directly below the dam by the spillways (925-5-A). The local perception is that the government is trying to shut people out, so there needs to be a way to balance the security issues with recreation. On the north side, tracts should be turned into wildlife reserves so pheasants return. The area also needs a gun range, and Reclamation should be open to a sporting group building and managing the range. All of these things help businesses in the community.

Don Handy, Minidoka County Commissioner: Interested in keeping the ground that benefits irrigation districts in Reclamation's hands. Also concerned about the spread of weeds from Federal ground, and the fact that any time land is not tended or watched, it becomes a dump. It is not clear to most people what land is Reclamation's and what belongs to the BLM. The county is also interested in recreation.

Billy Thompson, Minidoka Irrigation District (MID): The key concern is that irrigation district assets are protected because the ability to maintain facilities is limited. If we don't develop portions of the parcels, we are missing a chance for recreation benefit or wildlife habitat, but we need to make sure that the primary use of the land is irrigation and maintenance of those facilities.

John concluded the roundtable issue discussion by assuring the AHWG that Reclamation will look at every concern people have, and will faithfully track every issue through to conclusion. Paul C. asked what the next step is if everyone agrees on how the lands should be managed, and if that plan falls outside of what Reclamation can legally do.

Chris Ketchum responded to Paul's questions by returning to Reclamation's sideboards. Because Reclamation has been historically a construction agency, they are not equipped to deal with some issues like wildlife habitat, recreation, and land disposal and exchange. In some circumstances Reclamation can do some of those things, but nuances in the authorities tend to make our implementation appear to be somewhat inconsistent. For example, Reclamation was able to work with Jerry to square-up boundaries, but only because it involved a project to relocate irrigation facilities. At Lake Walcott State Park, Reclamation does not have authority to directly manage it, but can enter into an agreement with the state. Reclamation does have more options with local governments, like counties and cities, but many other actions require an Act of Congress. Sideboards are similar for law enforcement. In the past, Reclamation could not enforce any regulations on their lands; now, Reclamation can work with local law enforcement to issue fines or citations. Trapper requested clarification on law enforcement, and was informed by Chris that Reclamation does not nor will it have its own enforcement personnel.

Chris and John both emphasized that the AHWG should not feel limited in their ideas and explorations in this process. Reclamation will let the group know if some action cannot be done as the group envisions, or what other conditions would have to be in place to help make good ideas become reality. The ideas can be described in the plan so that what the public really wants to do is documented, and then explain why Reclamation does not have authority for a particular idea.

Guy suggested that the participants review previous RMPs to gain an understanding of the kinds of things in these plans and how they are set up. Carolyn Burpee Stone will get copies of some of the highlights from the Ririe Reservoir RMP to the AHWG to assist them.

V. DATA OVERVIEW

Gary Young, Reclamation's GIS Mapping Specialist, described the maps that the AHWG would receive at the next meeting. The maps are based on aerial photos taken in 2000 and 2001 of the entire area. The parcels of land are outlined, but are not survey grade. Using the aerial photos enables us to see where the parcels are and what is happening on them now. The maps will be provided as a series of 11x17 maps with an index page, all at the same scale. This information will evolve over time, so the maps will be date-stamped.

VI. PROJECT PURPOSES REVIEW

Carolyn, Reclamation's Team Leader for the RMP, called the AHWG's attention to the project purposes described in the binder. This is the sheet labeled "Authorization and Compliance Requirements." Five project purposes have evolved over time and are described on the sheet. These project purposes will guide Reclamation in deciding first if the land is to be kept for project purposes, and second how each parcel is going to be managed. If it is determined that a parcel is not needed for project purposes now, but may be needed later, we also have to decide how it will be managed in the interim. In addition, as described in the binder, Reclamation has

limited authorities which may affect implementation of some proposed RMP actions. Reclamation is also required to comply with other Federal regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, among others.

Billy expressed an interest in keeping the ground as government land so that river access will be available for future generations as private riverside development occurs. Trapper said that we should look beyond the individual parcels to the bigger picture. John agreed that Reclamation will approach the issue on both a parcel-sized scale and on a larger scale.

VII. RESOURCE INVENTORY

Kevin Butterbaugh, Project Manager and Principal Planner, described one of the first steps in the RMP process: the resource inventory. The goal of the resource inventory is to assess the existing condition of lands and the land status on a parcel-by-parcel and regional level.

Natural resources to be included in the inventory include the following:

- Climate
- Air quality
- Soils, in terms of land uses and overuses
- Geology
- Topography, including potential wetland locations
- Water resources and hydrology, including drain flows, wetlands, and aquifer recharge mechanisms
- Water quality, including aquatic resources
- Vegetation and wetlands, including habitat and noxious weeds
- Wildlife resources, including identification of species that use the study area and adjacent habitats, and existing and potential conflicts, as well as sensitive, threatened, and endangered species

Land status and socio-cultural resources include the following:

- Visual resources
- Socioeconomics, including demographics and applicable economic conditions
- Land use and status analysis, including investigating municipal and industrial uses, assessing encroachments and property interests, evaluating the appropriateness of grazing and agricultural uses on parcels, investigating illegal and unauthorized uses like dumping and shooting, and evaluating potential for land exchanges
- Recreation
- Transportation and access
- Public services and utilities
- Agriculture
- Cultural resources—Carolyn noted that Reclamation has completed a Class 1 cultural resources survey, including records search. Reclamation will look at historic, prehistoric, and paleontological resources, as well as sacred sites and Indian Trust Assets.

VIII. WRAP-UP AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2002 (Thursday). Unlike the other AHWG meetings, this one will be a daytime meeting (approximately 8 am to 5 pm) and entail a field tour and meeting. Information on logistics will be distributed at a future date.

The web site is working at <http://www.pn.usbr.gov/>. If something comes up between meetings, AHWG members can contact Carolyn or Chris. The web site also contains public involvement sites for the other RMPs if AHWG members would like to see other efforts.

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